

Has not the Savior come as the Bridegroom?

Parable of the ten virgins. Matthew xxv.

V. 1. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Then—at the time when the faithful and the wise servants, having marked the signs which were to indicate that the Son of Man must be near, according to his word, is giving the meat in due season to the household; and the evil servant saith in his heart, My Lord delayeth is coming, and begins to smite his fellow servants, (the wise and faithful), and to eat and drink with the drunken,—then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto these virgins which went forth to meet the bridegroom.

Let us here for a moment consider this question. How are we to understand this parable? Is Christ to come in a distinct character, represented by the bridegroom, or is his coming, as King of kings, to be like the coming of a bridegroom in a marriage arrangement? In other parables we invariably understand that some distinct office, character, or work of Christ, is presented to our view. In the parable of the Tares of the Field, we understand the man who sowed good seed in his field to bring to view the Son of God, as Creator and Proprietor of the world, his agency in counteracting the malice of the devil, and the process by which he will entirely destroy his works. In the parable of the Nobleman, we understand to be taught, distinctly, the fact that our Lord has ascended up on high, to receive his kingdom and to return, & the manner in which he will dispose of his professed people and the world at large, when he shall have received the kingdom and returned. So the parable of the Vine and Branches—The Sheep-fold—The Vineyard let out to Husbandmen, &c., &c. These all make known some distinct office, character, or work of Christ, which are frequently and plainly brought to view in other portions of the word of God.

Now, if Christ is spoken of in the character of Bridegroom, and the word of God informs us of a marriage scene in which he is to be present as the Bridegroom, why should we suppose that this parable speaks of his coming as the King of glory, and not as the Bridegroom to the marriage. It certainly seems clear that it is the coming of the Savior as the Bridegroom, and not as the King of glory, of which this parable speaks; and the wonder now is, that we should have confounded one with the other as we have.

Let us proceed. Are there, now, any reasons for supposing that the Bridegroom has come, in the sense of the parable? In answering this question several particulars need to be understood. In every marriage arrangement there were the bridegroom and bride; the paronyms; (called in John iii. 29, and Judges xiv. 20, friends of the bridegroom, of whom there were two—one to wait on the bride the other on the bridegroom,) the companions or virgins, Judges xiv. 11, Psalm xlv. 14; and the guests. There must also be a time and place for the marriage.

Does the word of God give us any information upon these particulars in the case of the marriage of the Lamb? 1. Who is the Bridegroom? It is hardly necessary to answer, The Son of God. Matthew ix. 14, 15; John iii. 29.

2. Who is the Bride? Let the Revelator

answer:—"And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, 'Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal: and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

The testimony of Paul agrees with that of John: "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Gal. iv. 26. What Old Jerusalem was to the Church under the old covenant, that the New Jerusalem is to be, to the Church under the new covenant in its perfected state. As Jehovah declares that he married the old Jerusalem, Ezekiel xvi., so the Son of God is to be married to the new Jerusalem.

3. Who may be the paronyms—the friends of the Bride and Bridegroom? If, as Dr. Clarke informs us, (notes on John iii.) it was their office to make the covenant between the parties; and, according to Calmet, (Dic. Art. Marriage,) "to perform the ceremonies of the wedding," it would seem that "the King who made a marriage for his Son," Matt. xxii. 2, must be the Friend of the Bridegroom, "and the Spirit," Rev. xxii. 17, the Friend of the bride.

4. Who are the virgins, their companions? Of these Calmet says: "A number of young people kept him [the bridegroom] company during the days of the wedding, to do him honor; as also young women kept company with the bride all this time, [usually seven days.] The companions of the bridegroom are expressly mentioned in the history of Samson, Judges xiv. and Cant. v. 1; viii. 13; also the companions of the bride, Cant. i. 4; ii. 7; iii. 5; viii. 4; Psalm xlv. 9, 14, 15. . . . The friends and companions of the bride sang the Epithalamium, or wedding song, at the door of the bride the evening before the wedding. Psalm xlv. is such a wedding song. The ceremony of the wedding was performed with great decorum, the young people of each sex being kept separate, in distinct apartments, and at different tables.—(Dic.)

May not the companions of the bride, then, be brought to view, singing "the wedding song," in Rev. xix. 6, 7? And I heard the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying,

Halleluiah!

For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him, For the marriage of the Lamb is come, And his wife hath made herself ready!"

The companions of the Bridegroom, also called virgins, are evidently brought to view in the parable.

5. Who are the guests? All those who are gathered from the highways, by the servants, who are found with the wedding garment on at the time of the marriage feast.—Matt. xxii. 8—14.

6. When does the marriage of the Lamb take place—before or after he comes, as the King of glory, to make his people immortal? Now let us keep in mind these different parts of the scene, and it may not be so difficult to settle this question as might be at first supposed, viz., the coming of the Bridegroom "to the marriage," the marriage itself, and the marriage supper. It must be evident to all that the coming of the Bridegroom to the marriage, precedes the marriage, and both of these precede the marriage supper; and if we can tell at what point in the process the people of God actually meet the Savior, we can tell whether they arrive at that point by the fulfillment of this parable.

In what character, then, do they meet him? Not as the Bridegroom coming to the marriage, but as the King of glory—the lord returning from the wedding. Luke xii. 35—37. Is it not clear, then, that the coming of the Bridegroom, in the sense of the parable, and the marriage itself, must precede the change to a state of immortality? But, 6. Where is the marriage to take place? As the Lord Jesus is to receive for himself a kingdom before he returns, and as the New Jerusalem is to be the metropolis of his kingdom—the City of the great King—it is evident that his inauguration must take place before his coming as the King of glory. And so, on the sounding of "the seventh angel," "great voices in heaven," proclaim

"The kingdoms of this world are become
The kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ!
And he shall reign forever and ever!"

Although he is "the appointed heir of all things," "in the world to come," and the decree has given him "the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," still, he does not receive his kingdom, in fact, till the Ancient of Days sits in judgment. Then one like the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days, and they bring him near before him, and there is given him "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." Must not this actual bestowment of power and territory be identical, as to time, with the marriage of the Lamb—if it be not indeed the event denoted by his marriage?—his inauguration in the holy city—when "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," according to the words of the angel Gabriel? Luke i. 32. It certainly is very clear that it must be so. And if so, the coming of the Bridegroom to the marriage must denote that change in his heavenly state, in which he comes to the Ancient of Days to receive dominion, and glory, which we know must take place before he can come in his glory, and as he comes in his glory to gather his elect, his coming as the Bridegroom must precede his marriage, and the presentation of the "chosen" guests at the marriage supper, when the final decision is made.

With these several particulars before the mind, we are prepared to proceed:—

Verse 2. "And five of them were wise," careful, provident, "and five were foolish," careless, improvident.

Verses 3 and 4. "They that were foolish," careless, improvident, "took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise," careful, provident, "took oil in their vessels with their lamps." These lamps were evidently what we call torches, made by winding a bunch of flax or cotton upon the end

of a stick, and saturating it with oil; and as this would soon burn out unless it were often supplied with oil, the oil in the vessel for that purpose, though a small matter in itself, was indispensably necessary. The omission indicated a want of hearty interest in the marriage arrangement. The lamp, or torch, as a symbol, doubtless denotes the Bible, as the oil does grace. Grace is to the word, what oil is to the lamp. The "vessels" may denote the means of grace which are adapted and designed to keep our lights burning. It is the highest folly—the most fatal carelessness, as to the great purposes for which the word of God is given to men, to think of deriving light from the word of God, while we refuse, through pride, fear, or the love of human praise, to avail ourselves of those means of grace which are necessary to the understanding of its lessons, the observance of its requirements, and the attainment of its promises.

Ver. 5. "While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept." The wise slumbered, the foolish slept. Every one knows the difference between these two states, naturally; and between the states with which they correspond, spiritually.

Ver. 6. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet him." If other parts of the parable had spoken of days or nights, it might be supposed at once that this "midnight" was a chronological mark; though it may be understood in that light, it is more likely to express the state of things when the cry is made—the security of midnight. Vs. 7, 8, 9. "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out; but the wise answered, saying, Lest there be not enough for us and you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." The "not so" of our version, supplied by the translators, gives the answer of the wise virgins a harshness that does not belong to it. The reading here used is authorized by the best critics. (See Dr. Clarke.) They had proceeded so far as companions, and the wise would have aided the foolish, if it could have been done with safety to themselves; while they pity them, they give them the only advice which can be of any service. V. 10. "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." The same carelessness which disposed them to go forth without oil, at first, seems to have marked this last effort also. The advice could not have been a mockery; they did not follow it as they should have done. Vs. 11, 12. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." The master of the house has risen up, the careless are too late.

Now we are prepared to ask, Does this parable give a history of the Adventists, or not? Did they not take their Bibles and go forth, expecting to meet the Lord in '43? When that time passed did he not tarry to them? Did they not then slumber and sleep? Have they not heard the cry, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him! and did they not then arise and trim their lamps? Surely our history is a perfect fulfilment of the parable, and if so, they have their lamps now trimmed and burning, and are waiting their Lord's return from the wedding, or they have gone to buy.

If this is not our present position, then we have been wrong in every position behind us, for just such a path must be travelled by those who meet the Lord. If this is the position of the virgins, then the Lord may come at any moment, and must of necessity come quickly; but if this is not their position, the Lord cannot come till they arrive at just such a point.

A query may arise, in some minds, whether we have had the true midnight cry, since it is found that "all" who were looking for the Lord were not particularly affected by the preaching of "the seventh month." But it is well known that the universal terms, *all, every, &c.* are not always to be understood in the absolute sense; and even if the term "all" is to be so understood in this case, is it not true that "all those" who went forth in the beginning of the Advent movement, also arose from their slumbering and sleeping in the seventh month? Certain it is that the "cry" originated, humanly speaking, and did its chief work in that part of the great field which was first visited with the Advent doctrine in its more general form. And as that was the only section in which the interest had passed the crisis, which was followed by the slumbering and sleeping, so it was the only one which could be, or needed to be, affected by the cry. Those who had not had time to fall into that state, after receiving the Advent truth, could not be aroused from it. Is it not as evident that we have had the cry, as that the virgins have gone forth to meet the Bridegroom, or that we have had the tarrying time? Would it not be as dangerous to expect the cry hereafter as to look into the future for any of the way-marks by which we have been guided in the past? We should not give up that we have had the cry, unless God should give us something more like it; and how that can be, it would be difficult to tell.

And here it may be proper to remark, that it is of the greatest importance that we understand our true Bible position. Our special duties, our trials, our safety, must depend, in a great measure, upon that. "And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." Luke xii. 47. If we have the means of knowing the will of God, we must use them; if it can be known, it must be by the word of God. If we are where Lot's wife is to be particularly remembered, and the faintness of Esau is felt, and his temptations are before us, why, this is the time to flee, and not to think of friends or treasure in Solom—the time for diligence in avoiding the roots of bitterness that may trouble us, and the profanity which may dispose us to barter our birth-right. If we have only the gleanings after the harvest is done to perform, it is not the time for sowing. If we have got into the still waters of peace and safety which are to mark our entrance into the harbor of the eternal city, let us not be afflicted that we have not the stir and excitement of the broad ocean. If we have come to the marriage, and are now in the guest-chamber, where all depends on our keeping our garments, as we have only the final examination of the King to pass, it is too late for the slumbering and sleeping virgins to be aroused by the cry, "Go ye out to meet the Bridegroom!"

HAS THE BRIDEGROOM COME?

The decision of this question must depend upon what is to be understood by his coming to the marriage. If it means his coming in glory, he has not so come. If it means some other event, which is to precede his coming in glory, though intimately connected with it, the Bridegroom may have come in the sense of the parable. But will it not be spiritualizing to understand the text to refer to anything but his coming as the King of Glory? We have taken it for granted that it does speak of his coming in glory, and have read the text, in our minds, as if it read, "And while they went to buy, the Lord himself descended from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God—the dead in Christ were raised, those who

were his among the living were changed, and these all were caught up together to meet him in the clouds, to be forever with the Lord." These are precisely the ideas we have attached to the words; but is there anything like them here? Certainly not. It will be seen, then, at once, as indeed the form of speech requires, that the parable is to be interpreted in the spiritual or figurative sense: and as no one supposes that Christ will be married, as human beings are married, the only point to be settled is, What is denoted by the coming of the bridegroom to the marriage? Does it refer to some distinct event, or to nothing in particular? If it does refer to any particular event, what is that event?

All who give the text a particular reference will admit that it applies to the period of the second advent. Now there are but two events to which it can be supposed to refer. 1. To his uniting himself to his church—the members—in their glorified state, or, rather, that they may be glorified. 2. To his actual inauguration, or coronation, as the "Lord of the whole earth;" the reception of "the throne of his father David," to "reign forever and ever;" when they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imaginations of their evil heart."—Jer. iii. 17. Is not this the throne of his glory, on which the Son of man shall sit, when he shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him?—Matt. xxv. 31.

We are aware that the prevailing opinion, which supposes the church to be the bride, is so deeply rooted, that it is difficult to see that anything else can be the truth, although it may be acknowledged by those who hold on to it, that it is not easy to harmonize the word of God with that supposition. But it must be seen at once, that while the relation between husband and wife is occasionally referred to, as illustrative of the relation between Christ and believers, the "allegory," as Paul calls it, in its complete form, runs thus: under the old covenant, God is the husband, "Jerusalem," "the land" or country is the wife, and the church are the children. Hos. i.; Ezek. xvi. xliii. xxiv. 15–27; Gal. iv. 25. Under the new covenant, Christ is the husband, the New Jerusalem the wife, and believers the children. Gal. iv. 26–31. But the words of the Revelator must settle the question with all those who do not see fit to "add to the words of the prophecy;" and he informs us that "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." If that is the explanation of the symbol, who will presume to give another explanation to that explanation?

But it will be asked, "Is that city, of stone walls and gates and foundations, to be the bride of Christ? Can a city make herself ready? Is it the bride—the city—that says with the Spirit, 'Come?' " Whatever may pertain to the city, that certainly is what is called "the bride, the Lamb's wife." And pray, why may not a city be personified, in the symbolic imagery of the word of God, and made to speak and act, as well as "the floods clap their hands, and the trees rejoice?" Surely it is not difficult to see how a city may make herself ready, especially when we read, in explanation: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen," in order to be ready. Comp. Ezek. xvi. 10, 13. But this "fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Yes, the holy city is indebted to the same grace for her purity, that the saints are indebted to for theirs.

Again, it is objected, that "the church, made up of believers, is brought to view as sustaining the same relation to Christ that the wife does to the husband." Very true. "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and husbands should love their wives, even

as Christ also loved the church."—Eph. v. 23—25. But is there any intimation that this relation between Christ and the church is not to exist till he comes again? or does it already exist? Besides, even if it were distinctly declared, as in the case of the city, that the church, in its members, was "the bride," or "wife" of Christ, and that he was to be married to her at his return, which is no where stated, it could only be a matter of doubt which of the two acts could be referred to by "the marriage" in the parable—the reception of the kingdom, city, and throne, or the reception of the members of his body—the church. As it now is, there is scarcely room for a doubt. All the circumstances of the case are clearly in favor of referring it to the former of the two acts.

In one case the relation has existed from the days of the apostles, in the other it was not to exist till the time of the second advent. The old and familiar "allegory" cannot be applied in one case, without making the free-woman both "the mother" and the "children." The literal facts, on which the parable is founded, are in favor of the holy city as the bride: for the Bridegroom, when he came to the marriage, always "came" to the residence of the bride's father. And, finally, to refer the marriage to the actual investment of Christ with "the throne," makes it the means of marking a clearly-stated event, which we all know is brought to view as preliminary to his coming in glory, to gather his elect, and to punish the wicked; to refer it to the reception of the church, tho' this is also an important event, destroys the symmetry of the parable, inasmuch as it would be out of all order to make the virgins and guests the bride or wife.

It will also be asked, "In what sense can it be said, the Bridegroom came? and how did the virgins go in with him to the marriage? Of course it could be only in a sense which accords with the nature of the event which the marriage denotes.—The coming of the bridegroom would point out some change of work or office, on the part of our Lord, in the invisible world; and the going in with him a corresponding change on the part of his true people. With him it is within the veil—where he has gone to prepare a place for us; with them it is outside the veil, where they are to wait and keep themselves ready till they pass in to the marriage supper.

Whether the great transaction, denoted by the marriage, has taken place, or not, we may not be able to decide; but that the Bridegroom has come, and that those who were ready have gone in with him to the marriage, is at least possible; and there are some reasons for believing that to be the fact.

These reasons may be given in considering this awfully serious question:—

IS THE DOOR SHUT?

By this act is undoubtedly denoted the exclusion from all farther access to saving mercy, those who have rejected its offers during their time of probation. And none will deny that whenever the Bridegroom shall have come, that change in the condition of the great mass of the world will have taken place. Is there any evidence from the word of God to shew that that change is to take place any perceptible time before the Lord Jesus appears in his glory—before his people are made immortal? In the absence of all analogies, which might fairly be referred to, we must rely upon the plain statements and facts brought to view in the word of God. The necessary and natural order of events, in which the question is involved, then, is thus presented: The Son of God sits at his Father's right hand "until his enemies are made his footstool,"—i. e. are given over to him as enemies doomed to

death.—They are no longer the subjects of his intercessions. This, we are assured, takes place "at the end."

This act, it is clear, must be the same as that which is spoken of in the second Psalm, in which the heathen are given to the Son for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, whom he breaks with a rod of iron, and dashes to pieces like a potter's vessel,—the same that marks the sounding of the seventh angel, when great voices in heaven proclaim, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever," for there could be no propriety in saying they had become his, unless it were by actual reception, as they had been his by grant long before. And that act must precede his appearing to gather his elect, for, 1. a part of his elect are under the dominion of death, one of the enemies to be destroyed, and he will not destroy that enemy till he has been put into his hands; and, 2. as he appears in his glory when he appears to gather his elect, he must have received that glory before he could appear in it.

Now, as it is almost impossible that this order of events should not also require order of time, it would seem that some time must elapse, how much we cannot tell, between the closing of Christ's intercessions for the world, and his appearing to gather his elect. May not that time be marked by the Lord himself—the first point by the coming of the Bridegroom, when the kingdom of heaven is likened unto the virgins who go in with him to the marriage; the last point by his return from the wedding, when he shall receive them to the marriage supper?

Again, what is said of the foolish virgins seems necessarily to imply that the righteous are here, after the door is shut: "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, lord, open unto us." Can such a prayer as that be offered, after the appearing of the Lord of glory—after the resurrection of the righteous dead, and the removal of all the righteous to meet the Lord? Impossible. They may call upon rocks and mountains to hide them from the presence of the Lord, but after all that has taken place, the wailings and curses of an undone soul will be the only sound that falls from the lips of those who may find it possible, even to think of the neglected door of mercy.

Once more. If the parable is to be considered, in its most prominent features, the history of the people of God just prior to the coming of the Lord, and if there is good reason to believe that the history of the Adventists is found there, it would seem to be as clear that the Bridegroom has come, and that they who were ready have gone in with him to the marriage, and that the door is shut, as that any other part of the parable has been fulfilled. And with this supposition the condition of things seems fully to correspond. It is confessed, by those who could never be suspected of any desire to favor our position, that there has not been such a time of religious indifference for many years. It may be shown from a large number of facts that the last cases of spiritual interest among the professed churches were the result, directly or indirectly, of the Advent doctrine; that where that doctrine has been avowedly opposed, and its believers silenced, spiritual death has followed, our enemies being judges. And we do not know of a single case of noticeable religious interest but where the doctrine is received, or at least not opposed; and these cases are so limited in their extent and number, that they can form no objection to the supposition that the door is shut, but rather go to confirm it.

May it not, therefore, be fairly supposed,—from the fact that such an event, as that to which we have referred the marriage, is to take place in con-

nection with the end—that by all our forms of light we must be near the end—that the fulfillment of the parable seems to place us after a movement, such as we might expect that event to produce, and from the state of things around us, and among us, to say nothing of the harmony of the word of God, not found in any other view, which it affords,—may it not be fairly supposed that the Bridegroom has come, that the door is shut, and that we must soon meet the KING OF GLORY?

A few words on the practical results of this position and we are done. 1. How should we expect the world to regard the truth, supposing this position to be correct. Why, that they would care hardly enough about it, to excite interest sufficient to give vent to a very severe curse, upon those who believe it. Having rejected the truth—the only means by which God can save men—and having turned away their ears with loathing from its warnings and promises, they would be perfectly lulled to sleep by the cry of peace and safety. And if there is any truth in the word of God, this is to be the condition of the world when their destruction cometh—when they are surprised as by the thief in the night. And how do we now find it? Why, it would seem that God is speaking to us as loudly,—by the ominous indifference, which everywhere prevails around us, and which, in spite of ourselves almost disarms us, and makes us even afraid of our chosen friends, lest we become infected beyond recovery,—as loudly as he has spoken by the falling stars, the darkened sun, or by the army of scoffers who have testified, though unwillingly, for the truth. And does it not say to us, *The judgment is here!*

And from this spirit of indifference arises one of our chief trials and dangers. We can hardly endure it, that a cause so well sustained by the truth of God, that has excited so wide an interest, and is so fraught with promise in everything that can rejoice the Christian heart, should sink into contempt. We have been accustomed to ride upon the whirlwind and storm, it is difficult to accommodate ourselves to the dead calm. With our old landmarks all in sight we felt quite at home; now that we have passed them, instead of keeping our eye steadily upon the lone promise that hangs out like a beacon light at the end of the voyage, the eye wanders around the unmarked horizon in fearfulness that we have lost our track. But God is with us still; and the present, like every other inch of the voyage, corresponds exactly with the chart. And that assures us, that right in the midst of this dead calm, our Forerunner, who has gone to look out the anchoring ground within the veil, is to appear to bring in safely all that look for him. There is no trouble about the old land marks, they have answered their purpose, look out for the Forerunner and all will be right.

2. But if the door is shut is there anything more to do for our fellowmen? There may be something, though, on any supposition there cannot be much more to be done. If we attempt to labor as we have done heretofore, it amounts to but little; if we should change our position and try to labor as others do, we could not expect to do any better than they do, and that is a little nearer to nothing than we are doing. We must adjust ourselves to the Bible position, and see that all our labors are "according to the will of God." Our great work is this: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching! Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat and come forth

and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

But can any sinners be converted if the door is shut. Of course they cannot, though changes that may appear to be conversions may take place. The state of mankind before God, would be very much as it has been in cases where communities have been given up of God to destruction. While the great mass were to be no longer the subjects of prayer or counsel, individuals who differed in their apparent character, were still the subjects of prayer and counsel. In the case of the Jews, in the days of Jeremiah, their fate was decided, and he was commanded not to pray for them or to lift up a cry for them. Jer. xi. 11—14: xiv. 11. But still he was to separate the precious from the vile, (xv. 19,) and when the wrath came upon them, there was found a Baruch, (xlv.) to be spared; and there were others who were counseled and prayed for as the subjects of mercy, conditionally. xlii. 9—12. So it was at the time of the Savior's ministry; after he had pronounced their doom and declared "their house was left unto them desolate," we know that individuals were the subjects of mercy, and were actually brought to believe in Christ.

And as it is a fundamental principle in the economy of heaven, that "it is accepted according to what a man hath," we know that at the closing of the door of mercy, all who fear God and work righteousness, according to the light they have, must be embraced by the arms of his mercy; though as the measure of light they have differs, the apparent form of their character must differ. And there may be changes in the form of their character, which we might call con-

versions, though it would imply no change in their inward character before God. That such may be found, for whom we should labor, there can be no doubt; and in fact, it is with such a class only, few indeed is their number, that our labors are in any sense successful. The few that make up this class, would, therefore, form the limits of our labors for others, excepting that we exhort one another.

But to think of laboring to convert the great mass of the world at such a time, would be as idle as it would have been for the Israelites, when they were down by the Red sea, to have turned about to convert the Egyptians. It would be labor lost, to say nothing of the danger we might incur upon our own souls. Take heed to yourselves. And if you can do good to others in the name of the Lord, do it. But let no man take thy crown.

3. What must be the effect of this position upon ourselves. If we may speak from experience, it will be to revive the same carefulness and watchfulness, which we were all waked up to in the seventh month. True, it will occasion a good many fears, that we may have let slip the words which we have heard, and strayed fatally from the narrow path; but it will not hurt those who have not knowingly and wilfully thrown away their wedding garment. They will return to the narrow path, and seek to remove every spot from the soul, and take their position anew, with their loins girded about, and their lights burning, to wait for the Lord.

4. Finally, if this should prove to be the true scriptural position, it makes all that has appeared to be somewhat mysterious, perfectly plain. And yet we shall see that our want of attention to the words of the parable, was the occasion of the important trial and test through which we have passed. We ex-

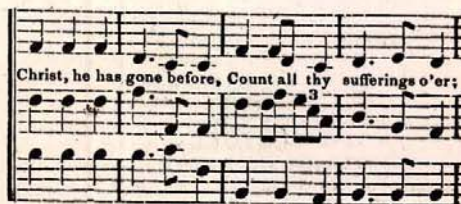
pected to meet the King of glory, as much as Abraham expected to offer his son, and we made the needed preparation. Perhaps it was necessary that we should take that step in the dark, since, as it was to be so important a one, if not absolutely decisive, we should not have taken it as we did, if we had seen it as we now do. Let us hold fast, and be ready for the call to the marriage supper of the Lamb!

N. B. For the views advanced in this sheet, the subscribers are alone responsible. It may be, however, that their connection with other papers, (the former with the "Advent Herald," the latter with the "Hope of Israel,") may give rise to the inquiry, "Why do these views appear in this form?" The answer is, first, those who bear the chief responsibility of those papers, could not be readily consulted, and it was not wished to urge the publication of these views without such consultation. Secondly, it was not desired to make their circulation extend beyond our Advent friends; and, thirdly, as it was believed that these views might afford light and counsel and encouragement to those who are waiting the Son of God from heaven, it was desired that they might be put in some form for that purpose as soon as possible.

We have no time or disposition for contention.—If these views are found worthy of reception, let them be received; if not, reject them. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.

A. HALE,
J. TURNER.

Jesus is there.



2 Souls for the marriage feast,
Robed and prepared;—
Holy must be such guests:
Jesus is there!
Saints, wear your victory palms,
Chant your celestial psalms:
Bride of the Lamb, thy charms,
Oh! let me wear.

3 Heaven's bliss is perfect, pure—
Jesus is there!
Heaven's bliss is ever sure—
Thou art its heir.
What makes its joys complete—
What makes its hymns so sweet;
There we our friends will greet—
Jesus is there.